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NEWS RELEASE

Contact: Elliot Krieger, media relations 222-8471
Embargo until: Tuesday, December 13th, 2005 - Noon

Report on Hope High School Complex Finds “Positive Progress” Has Been Made

PROVIDENCE – The second Progress Report on the Hope High School Complex, released today (Tuesday, December 13th, 2005) by Education Commissioner Peter McWalters, has found that “positive progress” has been made to date at the three schools at Hope.

The report, prepared by Special Master Nicholas C. Donohue, will be posted at noon on the R.I. Department of Elementary and Secondary Education website, www.ride.ri.gov

“It’s clear from this report that the school opening this fall at the Hope complex was a success,” said McWalters. “The Providence Public School Department has committed itself to success at Hope. But this is not going to be a process measured in months. It will take a long time to get all the components aligned for real school improvement.”

The report tracks progress toward meeting the goals and objectives of Commissioner McWalters’s Decision and Order of Reconstitution regarding Hope High School. The Commissioner last February ordered that the school be reconstituted as three small learning communities. He issued a Corrective Action Plan that specified a series of actions to lead to more teacher training, a more personalized learning environment for the students, and increased community involvement in the three new high schools: Hope Arts, Hope Information Technology, and Hope Leadership Schools.

The report from Donohue discusses areas of strongest performance to date and areas that are in need of improvement.

“The ‘transformation’ of Hope ... cannot be overstated,” Donohue wrote in his report. “The school is under control. The students are focused and in class. The teachers are able to direct their attention to instruction. It is clearly the leadership evidenced by the lead administrators that has made the difference.”

Though his report found no areas of “critical concern,” Donohue identified several “areas in need of improvement,” notably the need for sufficient resources, more parent and community engagement, and increased personalization of teaching and learning.

Commissioner's Decision and Order
The Hope High School Complex:
Progress Report #2

Presented to Commissioner Peter McWalters
By
Nicholas C. Donohue, Special Master

December 2005

INTRODUCTION and OVERVIEW

Task Charge - Review

This is the second of a series of reports called for by the Decision and Order for Hope High School in Providence, Rhode Island delivered by Commissioner Peter McWalters in February of 2005.

The purpose of these reports is to provide a public vehicle for tracking progress toward the goals and objectives of the Commissioner's Decision and Order. To accomplish this – and consistent with the initial report presented last summer - this document will highlight positive developments, identify areas that need some additional attention and, if there are any, it will also identify areas of critical concern.

The report is presented in four sections. The first, *Introduction and Overview*, provides background and orientation about the Order and the report format as well as summary determination of Progress To Date.

The next section, *Part I – Commissioner's Decision and Order – Student Success at Hope*, describes successful implementation of the Order in terms of student outcomes. *Part II – Commissioner's Decision and Order – Areas of Compliance*, focuses on the prescriptions of the Order and progress toward their implementation.

An additional area of focus – one promised in this summer's Report #1 - has been identified and included in this report - *District Support for Compliance and Improvement*. The work of improving Hope is principally a school-based effort. Improvements in instruction, reduction of dropout rate, increasing parent involvement all depends on decisions and action on the part of school staff. However, there are related system-wide efforts to improve in these areas as well. These efforts and their related policies and actions have a significant effect on what happens at Hope.

Each of the areas of focus – Student Success, the Four Areas of Compliance, and the section on District Support – is addressed separately. For each, a vision of success is provided, describing in future terms the success at Hope. These “aspirational” narratives are followed by a brief review of baseline data from last year, when applicable. An analysis of “Progress to Date” follows that describes what has happened at Hope and to what result.

Finally, consistent with Progress Report #1, the updates on each area of compliance and the section of district support include lists of areas of strong performance; recommendations for improvement and areas of critical concern are provided.

The last section of the report – *Part IV – Conclusion* - provides concluding observations about the work at Hope.

Factors And Process For Determining Progress Made

In determining the sufficiency of implementation of the elements of the Order for the purposes of this report a number of factors have been taken into account.

First, the primary bases for determination of progress are the specific expectations articulated in the Order, related and available indicators, and observable evidence of achievement to high standards of implementation. In other words, what does the Order say needs to occur, are those issues being attended to, are they being attended to well, what is the relevant evidence that supports the findings of progress?

Second, are there significant mitigating circumstances that might legitimately impact the pace or depth of implementation?

Lastly, are there elements of the Order that, upon reflection some months after it's writing, deserve reconsideration or amendment? Put another way, does everything in the Order still make sense to do the way it is described in the Order? What changes, if any, need to be considered?

So, while the Order and its specific prescriptions are the most significant basis for determining the levels of progress achieved there are also other factors taken into consideration. In the end, the determination of progress, while informed by data and supported by evidence is based significantly on the professional judgment of the Special Master as authorized in the Order itself.

The Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) based the goals and measures established in this summer's Progress Report #1 significantly on SALT Survey data collected in years past. This winter the SALT Survey will be administered once again and those results will be used to determine progress by comparing that data to data from years past.

For the purposes of this report, determinations of progress have been made through a combination of data collected through: 1) a series of "Learning Walks" made complex-wide and in each Small Learning Community (Arts, Leadership and Information Technology (IT)); 2) a review of student and staff interviews in which roughly 120 students and 37 staff participated respectively; 3) the collection of evidence in the form of written artifacts, and 4) on-site observations made by the Special Master over the past three months.

Determination Of Progress - Summary

Hope is improving. Students are in school more persistently, the school is orderly and disruptive incidents are at a minimum. Last year at this time, there had already been numerous altercations between students. This year “zero fights” were reported at the end of the first quarter. A positive climate has been established, personalization is under way, community partnerships are growing, parents are reconnecting and the three small learning communities are continuing the process of developing distinct identities. As revealed in the body of this report these and many other substantive and positive developments have occurred since this summer’s review. Most importantly and significantly, classroom activity is noticeably more focused on learning.

The “transformation” of Hope in terms of tenor and order cannot be overstated. The school is under control. The students are in class and focused on learning. The teachers – a very strong faculty - are able to direct their attention to higher quality instruction. It is clearly the leadership evidenced by the lead administrators that has made the difference.

There remain significant challenges and related tasks. Not all implementation expectations have been met completely. This is to be expected and does not diminish the significance of all the positive developments at Hope. However, new, challenging work lies ahead and adjustments need to be made concerning particular facets of the Order already implemented. Indicators describing student success are being drafted and this conversation about shared expectations for student success needs to include a broader audience including students, parents and community partners. Advisories are in place, and need continued attention and improvement. Professional development activities are underway and they still need to be more focused and productive. Parent involvement is emerging and needs to increase and improve. Community partners are present and engaged in serious work and these arrangements need articulation. An increased, intentional focus on building a community of learners in which all voices influence policy and practice is growing. Instruction is improving due to the professionalism and competence of the staff and efforts need to continue to grow and support their leadership and initiative. Specifically, and perhaps most importantly, work must continue to build shared understanding about what is expected from students and what defines effective instructional practices.

In any improvement effort there are more and less critical moments. The beginning of this year was clearly one of those times and that moment was grasped through the leadership efforts of the new school administrators. Hope has entered another pivotal time on its journey to success. In order to sustain and amplify the gains made so far, there are strategic next steps that must be implemented – some immediately.

The principal observation is that having made a good start, the pieces need to come together. Stakeholders need to be able to see the parts and the whole. The inevitable hectic nature of the opening of school must transition toward a context in which well-facilitated deliberation on a small set of important, high-leverage topics is the norm.

It is inevitable and normal that with strong progress comes new challenges. Program changes are under way and adjustments need to be made. This is expected. The effort at Hope is a complicated and long-term one. In other words, satisfactory progress will include needs for continuous improvement.

It is the judgment of the Special Master that while there are specific areas that need attention and improvement to sustain the positive progress made to date, progress toward implementation of the Order is satisfactory and positive.

Part I - The Commissioner's Decision And Order: Student Success At Hope

The Decision and Order describes many activities, and attending to the successful implementation of those activities is essential, but the bottom line must remain – are students succeeding? The Commissioner's Order identifies these longer-term student success measures as the ultimate purpose of the Order itself.

As described this past summer, improvement in student outcomes is broken down into three sub-areas – success in getting to and staying in school, success in terms of the skills and knowledge we want students to master while in school and the success they achieve in their next steps in life, particularly, success in higher education.

Student Success at Hope: What We Are Trying To Accomplish
Students Go To School And Stay
Attendance is almost perfect. Tardiness is almost non-existent and always for understandable reasons. Suspensions are rare. Dropouts are in single digits percentage wise.
Students Succeed in School
Test scores go up, dramatically, in all academic areas and for all students. Exhibitions evidence high skills in problem solving, communication, collaboration and other life-long skills. A vast majority of students graduate, graduate on time and graduate prepared for their next step in life.
Students Have Successful Futures
Graduates are “better” for having attended Hope. They enroll in college, persist and graduate. They participate in the communities in which they live. Hope grads get and keep good jobs.

Progress to Date

Progress Report #1 released this summer presented both an ambitious set of *Future Expectations* and an analysis of the *Current Status* at Hope through the lens of a variety of indicators related to the Student Success framework described above.

The picture of Hope's recent situation concerning student outcomes was not a positive one. Recent dropout rates from years past predicted that one out of two incoming 9th graders at Hope would fail to graduate from Hope. Attendance was below the district average. Suspensions cost more than 1500 lost instructional/student days. “Proficiency” measured by test score data was very low. While systems for tracking readiness for post secondary educational opportunities are unable to provide an exact accounting, generous estimates suggest that typically less than a quarter of Hope students go on to some form of higher education without significant remediation.

For the purposes of this report, within the general area of *Student Success* - an emphasis is placed on the first sub-area – *Students Go To School And Stay*. This is because it is the area in which significant near-term improvements is possible and expected. This focus is consistent with the recommended year one priorities with the Student Success framework presented this summer.

“In order to continue the good work begun, there are a number of things that must happen in the near future that specifically relate to the areas identified in the broad category of “Student Success at Hope.”

This coming school year there must be an immediate and intense effort to:

- 1) Get students to school (increase attendance),*
- 2) Keep them in school (reduce suspensions and dropout)*
- 3) Increase aspirations of all students at Hope and especially the incoming 9th graders.*

Progress Report #1, p. 7

A year one goal of cutting the yearly dropout rate in half was presented to the Hope faculty this fall – 13% to 7%. While this will result in only an incremental reduction in the staggering four-year cohort dropout rate of 52% that predicts that just more than one out of every two incoming 9th graders will fail to graduate. (52% to 47%) It will be an enormous measurable success to achieve this first year goal.

Dropout rates are calculated on a yearly basis. Thus, clear and final data about dropout will only be available after the end of the school year. However, particular prescriptions embedded within the Commissioner’s Order that are intended to reduce dropout have been successfully or partially implemented. Those include: 1) a differentiated program of study for students entering Hope far below grade level in English Language Arts in which intensive support is provided on literacy; 2) the identification of Advisors for each and every Hope student; and 3) Credit Audits for every student that identify the gap between credits the student has earned so far and what is needed for graduation.

On account of these and other strategies to be implemented this year, the prospects for a reduction in dropout this year are strong.

There is firm data that suggests a dramatic reduction in suspensions from a total of 258 (Arts 66, Leadership 70, IT 122) suspensions - recorded at Hope last year at this time last year versus 153 (Arts 52, Leadership 33, IT 68) this year. This represents a huge reduction. Attendance has increased as well from last year to near the district average. Tardiness remains a significant issue with 21% of students reporting late on any given day.

Knowing that some of the major contributing factors for dropout is attendance – students who miss school and fall behind are more apt to leave for good – a working group of

parents is being convened to identify strategies for making sure students go to school. This effort is collaboration between PEEC and the Hope administration.

The third area, increasing aspirations, is progressing. The positive developments include a clear and pervasive message that each and every student “can and will be a success.” This is reinforced frequently in public sessions with students and adults.

The positive climate in terms of behavior has already allowed for a great emphasis on increased student aspirations. However, a majority of students interviewed report that while they are supported more and more by the staff and that expectations are rising, they are convinced that Hope is preparing them for high education.

On the other hand, at the end of the first marking period this fall roughly one in three Hope students were failing one or more courses. The bad news is the failure rates, which are still too high. The only good news that can be drawn from this is the assumption that high standards are being expressed and are part of the reason for this situation.

If we believe that high standards are important and possible for all students, then figuring out the appropriate balance between high expectations and how to provide the necessary supports to assure student success with so many entering Hope so far behind already. This is at the heart of the matter at Hope.

One innovation that is meant to address the fact that so many Hope students enter high school under-prepared is the scheduling of double periods of math and/or literacy supports. Another is a system of credit recovery that allows students to revisit failure apply themselves and capture the “credit” for a particular course before it snowballs into a larger routine of failure and disengagement. The success of these kinds of approaches cannot depend on revisiting subject matter “a second time” or “for twice as long,” but on a systematic and organized reflection and evaluation of instructional methods. It is this re-evaluation of practice within the context of low student preparedness that is the focus of improvement efforts at Hope and must remain so.

Student Success at Hope is the ultimate goal of improvement work at Hope and progress is being made. And while external expectations regarding measures such as test scores are natural, an over eagerness to improve immediately on these kinds of measures at the expense of real, substantive and sustainable improvements in teaching and learning would be a step backwards for Hope.

Some initial improvements in student outcomes will be achieved this year - particularly reductions in dropout and suspensions and increases in attendance. However, as articulated in this summer’s report – *“the timeframe for significant improvements in test scores and measures of student futures needs to be understood in terms of years, not months if real success is to be achieved.”*

Part II - The Commissioner's Decision and Order - Areas of Compliance

Because of the urgency related to the Hope High School Complex and its levels of performance there are intermediate, process goals established in the Order. These inputs are designed to contribute significantly to the student success measures reviewed in the previous section of this report. Thus, the specific areas of compliance articulated in the Order can be framed as investments toward the larger good of student success at Hope.

The Order itself can be described in terms of four general areas of compliance. The areas of compliance include: 1) The establishment of three autonomous, small learning communities, 2) increased “personalization” of learning for students, 3) professionalizing the workplace with and for staff; and 4) the involvement of parents, students and community members as full partners. Each of these areas is further defined and progress measured against a set of specific sub-elements originating within the Order.

Areas of Compliance	
Three Small Learning Communities	Personalization of Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Community✓ Clear Autonomy✓ Academy Themes✓ Learning Standards✓ Attention to Student Interests✓ Appropriate Schedule✓ 9th and 10th Grade Academy Structure✓ System for Ensuring Student Success✓ Shared Governance✓ Data Driven Planning✓ Sufficient Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Focused Instructional Strategies✓ Vibrant Advisory Structure✓ Committed Adult Advocates✓ Substantive Family Connections✓ Personal Learning Plans for All✓ Comprehensive Counseling Applied
Professionalism in Practice	Active Parents/Community Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Strong Leadership✓ Effective Teaching and Learning✓ Teacher Quality and Leadership✓ Appropriate Case Loads✓ High Quality Professional Development✓ Adequate Resources and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ High Quality Plans for Inclusion✓ Meaningful Participation in Governance✓ Sustained Organization✓ Written Community Partnership Agreements✓ Real Educational Connections✓ Inclusive Curriculum Design✓ Coordinated Delivery of Services✓ Links Through Advisories✓ Meaningful Youth Leadership
Methods of Measuring Progress and Success	
SALT Survey, Local Interviews, Observations/Learning Walks, Review of Artifacts, Test Scores, Data Points, Professional Judgment	

Area #1 – Three, Autonomous Small Learning Communities

Three Autonomous Small Learning Communities: What are we trying to accomplish	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Autonomy Academy Themes 	<p>The Hope Complex will be home to three vibrant, world-class communities of learning. Three distinct “schools” running independently with a limited number of operational issues managed through the Campus Coordinating Council. Deep, rich and distinct academic “themes” supported by community partners are evident and persistent for each SLC.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning Standards Student Interests Schedule 	<p>There are clearly articulated, ambitious learning standards for students that are understood by all students, teachers, parents and community members. All students have access to high-level coursework. Student needs and interests drive everything – staffing, schedule, professional development, etc. There is a schedule in place that supports personalized approaches to student learning. The schedule also accommodates deeply integrated partnerships and students “going to school” outside of the facility at partner sites.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9th and 10th Grade Academy Structure 	<p>There is a 9th and 10th grade academy structure that promotes the identity of each SLC, allows for sufficient exploration on the part of “undeclared” 9th and 10th graders, prevents dropouts and promotes personalization.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> System for Ensuring Student Success 	<p>The district Student Success Initiative is fully implemented in collaboration with community partners. Expectations regarding student and staff behaviors are reviewed and understood by all.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Shared Governance 	<p>Three independent School Improvement Teams are up and running, fully representative of parents, students, teachers and community members. The focus of SIT work is high stakes educational issues, particularly raising student achievement and the personalization of learning for each and every Hope student. Group process is managed at a high level.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inclusive, Data Driven Planning 	<p>Improvement planning is data-rich, transparent; results oriented, framed within clear, feasible timelines and followed up on regularly and responsibly. A wide variety of constituents participate in meaningful roles.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient Resources 	<p>There are sufficient staff and other resources to achieve the goals of the Order and to carry out the school’s mission.</p>

Progress to Date

Last year at Hope less than a third of students reported a strong and persistent sense of “belonging” at Hope. This is changing. A majority of students say they can identify an adult in the building who they perceive as available to them to discuss academic issues. A clear majority of student and staff respondents described things as being “much better” this year than last year. It is very common to hear incoming students in their first year at Hope describe their original reticence, trepidation and sometimes fear about coming to Hope and then their relief that the school is not what they anticipated, particularly in terms of student behavior and the general order necessary for learning. Students report a greater sense of safety and order at Hope. Teachers report an improvement in climate and morale. There is evidence of collaboration between veteran (54), experienced teachers new to Hope (26) and first year educators (28).

Actions that have contributed to these positive changes include a strategic, persistent focus on establishing a safe and orderly learning environment. Led with unfailing consistency and firmness by the three lead building administrators and reinforced by a strong team of Assistant Principals, this focus has “made all the difference” this year.

Other contributing activities that can be credited with inspiring a growing sense of community at Hope include a very spirited “pep rally,” a recognition for strong “attendance,” a celebration of “honor roll” students, and regular meetings of the entire staff focused on school improvement efforts. A recent highlight was the awarding of Hope’s football team with a league award recognizing the teams spirit and good sportship.

In order to sustain these gains in climate and culture, next steps should include specific and targeted strategies for transitioning from extrinsically motivated behavior management systems in which students respond to a clear set of externally developed rules to a system that promotes intrinsic or internally driven commitment to codes of conduct.

This effort to increase “ownership” of high standards of behavior at Hope must be an intentional effort led by school staff. Such an effort should include processes to gauge student feedback about discipline policies and their implementation (surveys, town hall meetings, regular communication between student government representatives and school administration).

This approach is consistent with expectations in the Commissioner’s Decision and Order that student needs and interests deeply inform school level policies and practices. In addition these kinds of interactive strategies that include direct input from students is also consistent with the Providence School District *Student Success Initiative*.

Student needs and interests are a concern of most everyone at Hope. There is frequent reference to the need for relevance and innovative ways of building on interest to help motivate students. However, while an analysis of student needs is at the heart of

determining programs for students and while efforts are being made in some cases to develop programs based on student interest, more needs to be done in this area to meet the expectations of the Commissioner's Order. Specifically, student input must be incorporated into decisions about the proposed Program of Study being developed for next year.

In terms of the growing identity of the three Small Learning Communities at Hope, the majority of staff and students still identify primarily as being part of "Hope High School" versus expressing a primary affiliation with either "Arts," "IT" or "Leadership." This is not surprising, as much effort has been placed on establishing unified expectations in a number of operational areas that cut across the complex as a whole.

However, the Commissioner's Decision and Order as currently articulated has a clear and specific goal of three autonomous, independently functioning small learning communities beyond what has been accomplished to date.

There are various initiatives already underway that as they continue will lead to the establishment of three SLCs. Each SLC has its own student government representatives. Work to finalize rubrics that establish what students need to know and be able to do has begun and needs to continue. As each SIT pursues the development of a comprehensive Providence One Plan (POP) this will allow for the further differentiation of purposes and related strategies and will lead to deeper autonomy. In addition, while the three lead administrators each currently have primary responsibility over particular complex wide issues in the name of all three SLCs. The current expectation is that as the year progresses, each of the three lead administrators will take on more generalized roles within their own SLC covering all related leadership and management concerns.

Each small learning community has a designated theme – Arts, Information Technology (IT) and Leadership, respectively. Work is underway to establish clarity and depth of each SLC's theme and distinction as a learning community. School-based indicators that describe student outcomes that are common across Hope and particular for each SLC have been drafted. Programs of Study for next year are near finalization. Within this latter effort, consideration has been given to how particular courses and groups of courses fit within the broader framework of each SLC.

The Order also prescribes the eventual division of many typical school functions among the three separate SLCs such as curriculum design and revision, professional development, teacher evaluation and student discipline, while establishing a Hope Complex Coordinating Council made up of representatives from each of the three SITs. Other facets of "autonomy" represented through governance structures are meant to include – separate School Improvement Teams (SITs), a Director's Cabinet to deal with issues of common interest as well as separately elected student governments for each SLC.

There is no cross-campus decision-making group up and running as of yet. However three independent School Improvement Teams (SITs) have been established and there are

plans to draw from these teams to create the Complex Coordinating Council later this winter. The SITs are still establishing their purposes and ways of doing business. The evolution of SITs is a positive development and will emerge as a cornerstone of the success at Hope.

Regarding SITs, work remains to: 1) narrow the scope of responsibility and activities for the SITs to focus on high stakes educational issues, 2) support effective SIT operations (agenda setting, meeting management) and 3) recruit and orient full complements of parents, student and community members. Efforts are underway to address these concerns.

There is no distinct 9th and 10th Grade academy structure at Hope, yet the intent of this invention is all but being met. Exploratory courses are available for 9th and 10th graders so that they can know more about what each SLC has to offer. The possibility of a “looping” arrangement through which advisors stay linked with their students for more than one year is a strong possibility. The area that needs more attention and action regards a process for some kind of summer transition activities into Hope for incoming students. Exploratory courses are in place, though this invention needs review as it comes at a cost to building the integrity and independence of the SLCs

Orientation to the structure at Hope, exposure to academic and behavioral expectations and standards, an introduction to the student advisor, and the initiation of the Individual Learning Plan process should all take place before students arrive in September. Events did not allow for a full transitional experience this year. Plans are being made for events this summer and early next fall.

Finally, an analysis of the performance levels of incoming students leads to a differentiated approach to course selection aimed at addressing cases where students are significantly behind in reading and or math. This approach provides extra help in literacy and or math for ninth graders who need it most. Safeguards must be maintained to guard against a de facto tracking program emerging. In addition, while literacy supports for incoming freshman are in place, they must be evaluated for effectiveness. Furthermore, tenth graders need continued, intensive support in these areas.

Well thought out school improvement plans is still a goal for Hope. The independent SITs will eventually become the locus of this kind of activity. Supported by a “Data Team” that analyzes data, investigates trends and is meant to inform SIT decision-making, governance teams at Hope will complete three-year Providence One Plans (PO Plans) this year. They will need significant support in getting this done. Facilitative assistance with this task will be a must given the newness of the teams and the enormity of the planning task in front of them.

“Sufficient resources” is a category of mixed progress at Hope. On the one hand the quality of individual teachers and thus the quality of the staff as a whole is very strong. Dedicated, interested in students, able and engaged are some of the words that describe the professionals at Hope. This was in part a result of decisions to allow for more open

hiring processes at Hope this past summer. However, the status of the facility as a whole, the roof, the availability of timely technology support and other material issues are of great concern.

The Hope Complex boasts an Information Technology SLC, but there remain un-networked machines in computer labs. Science is a statewide priority, yet the science labs are not fully functioning. Academic improvement is the central focus on the Commissioner's Order, yet some classes remain without the necessary texts and supplies to cover the most basic approaches to teaching and learning. These contextual issues cannot persist.

Steps were taken this summer to allow Hope to hire a lead "Teacher Leader" and a "Parent Coordinator." These positions remain unfilled. While another position established through the Order to play a "coordinating" role among the three SLCs was removed from the district budget this spring, a qualified district staff person has recently been assigned this role on a temporary basis.

The issue of "sufficient resources" relates directly to issues regarding the capacity and determination of the district office to assist at Hope. This is addressed in another part of this report more fully.

Strongest Performance, Areas In Need and Areas Of Critical Concern

The areas of strongest performance include:

- ✓ Learning Standards: The clear articulation of "essential learnings" in the form indicators and rubrics that detail what students need to know and be able to do to is a work in progress.
- ✓ Community: A clear sense of shared purpose is emerging.
- ✓ 9th and 10th Grade Academy: The innovations to help address under-prepared incoming students are notable.

The areas in need of improvement include:

- ✓ Autonomy and identity of each SLC: Greater differentiation of purpose that defines each of the three SLCs at Hope is essential.
- ✓ System for Ensuring Student Success: Building student ownership of the code of conduct and related responses.
- ✓ Shared Governance: The recruitment and full inclusion of parents, students and community members, stronger meeting processes and the full articulation of SIT roles and responsibilities remain a priority.
- ✓ Data Driven Planning: Efforts to focus SIT work on a multi-year POP plan development must move forward this year.
- ✓ Sufficient Resources: Technology resources and other needed material resources must be delivered to Hope immediately.

There are no areas of critical concern identified at this time. The overall progress in compliance area #1 - Three, Autonomous Small Learning Communities - is determined to be *satisfactory*.

Area #2 – Personalization

Personalization at Hope: What are we trying to accomplish.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Instruction	Work at Hope is personal. Instruction is rooted in relevance, relationships and individualized. It is driven by student needs, interests and learning styles. High standards are maintained.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Advisory Structure▪ Adult Advocate▪ Family connections	Advisories are a deeply rooted and embedded part of the school through which service referrals and family communications are managed. Every Hope student has an adult advocate whom they can identify. There is two-way, monthly communication between advisors and parents regarding how their child is doing in school and what the plans are for next steps. Staff is out in the communities where students live – exploring, learning and building relationships.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Personal Learning Plans	Personal Learning Plans are the heart of the matter at Hope. They are developed and implemented fully. They guide all activities related to student activities and direction. They are developed in partnerships with student, families and appropriate community partners. They are taken seriously and amended regularly.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Counseling	The Comprehensive Counseling model is applied consistently and pervasively at Hope.

Progress to Date

Personalization at Hope is growing. There are many strong relationships between individual teachers and students growing. There is also still a clear sense of commitment on the part of staff toward greater personalization.

The 2004 Salt Survey showed that only about 10% of students reported often getting individual advising and help from teachers. Likewise only about 13% reported that they felt comfortable “most of the time” talking to a teacher about personal issues, 27% said they felt the same about academic issues. About 20% reported that teachers took a personal interest in students most of the time or always. Initial data from student and staff interviews suggests this situation is turning around. Students report a change in the perceived attitude of teachers – “even some of the ones who had given up last year.”

The Commissioner’s Decision and Order links personalization most directly to the establishment of 1) student advisories, 2) Individual Learning Plans, 3) the related

personalization of learning experiences through increased community-based learning opportunities, 4) the implementation of the Comprehensive Counseling model, and 5) compliance with the broad scope of *Regents High School Regulations*.

Advisories are up and running. Student to staff ratios still exceed acceptable and agreed upon limits in a minority of cases. Staff and student interviews coupled with observations of advisories in action give a mixed picture of how well these are functioning. On the one hand, just having time with an adult in a setting focused on supporting student success is a benefit. Most staff are eager and willing to play this role.

Students see these opportunities as having significant potential, but that this potential is currently not maximized. To many, advisories seem disjointed and unfocused. An “Advisory Committee” has been formed to address these issues. It is working hard and is achieving some traction on specific issues. This group recently delivered a set of curriculum materials to advisors to support work with their students.

The role of advisors as primary links to families as described in the Order is emerging but unfulfilled. When interviewed most staff understood this as an area of responsibility, but likewise reported limited activity in actively contacting parents and guardians of students they have as advisors.

Individual Learning Plans are moving forward at Hope, albeit slowly. By the end of this month it is expected that a crucial part of these plans will be in place – the credit audit for each student describing where they are on the path to graduation. Building upon this foundation further articulation of academic, social and career goals will be possible. A long-term, developmental process, the creation of Individual learning Plans has been delayed but is underway. Specific, near term strategies for informing and engaging parents in this process are essential. Additional, high quality professional development support is needed to accomplish this task well.

Personalization of instruction still needs attention. Students respond that while there is a clear and appreciated improvement of teacher interest and investment they still report finding little relevance in many in class experiences. The system of accessing meaningful out of school experiences that might match particular student “interests” is still in need of development.

The placement of three federally funded School-Based Career Counselors at Hope was a positive step. Integrating their work and aligning their efforts to institutionalize applied learning opportunities for all Hope students remains holds great promise. Specifically, building on the success of Project Hope - which placed dozens of students in meaningful summer internships – should remain a priority. It makes sense that the focus of work for Hope is at Hope this year, however, the principle of “out of school learning” needs to be amplified at Hope as discussions move forward regarding unit planning and related instructional approaches.

The Comprehensive Counseling Model identified in the Commissioner's Order has its roots in the Providence School System. It is emerging as an operational framework for the work of the schools guidance counselors. More importantly, the quality and professionalism of the Guidance Counselors at Hope is very evident. They model positive, firm relationships with students, are accessible to parents and strive to communicate regularly with other staff. They represent well the overall quality of staff at Hope.

Progress is being made toward compliance with the Rhode Island Regents High School Regulations. The work at Hope regarding Performance-based Graduation Requirements (PBGR) is complicated, challenging and moving forward.

Strongest Performance, Areas In Need and Areas Of Critical Concern

The areas of strongest performance include:

- ✓ Comprehensive School Counseling Model: Genuine efforts have been made to implement this approach.
- ✓ Advisories: They are up and running and planning for their improvement is underway.
- ✓ Performance-Based Graduation Requirements: Initiative taken. Progress being made.

The areas in need of improvement include:

- ✓ Individual Learning Plans: Developing a detailed implementation plan for creating ILPs for each Hope student that includes strong parent engagement and access to community resource.
- ✓ Instruction: Personalization in teaching and learning particularly the utilization of internships and other community placements must continue to move forward.

There are no areas of critical concern identified at this time.

At this time, the overall progress in compliance area #2 – *Personalization at Hope* - is determined to be *satisfactory*.

Area #3 – Professionalism at Hope

Professionalism at Hope -What are we trying to accomplish.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Leadership 	<p>Hope is a model of professionalism. It is a place where strong support and strong accountability meet. Leaders put an emphasis on articulating a vision and a mission and they maintain a persistent focus on student learning.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teaching and Learning ▪ Case Loads 	<p>The building teems with professional activities – all hours - such as, team meetings at which student work is the centerpiece; extra-help sessions with students, meetings with parents. Instruction is based on the district scope and sequence and characterized by high expectations for all students. Reaching out beyond the school walls to find ways to engage students is the norm not the exception. Instruction and assessment are seamless, integrated functions evidenced, in part, by performance tasks that take full advantage of real world, service-learning opportunities provided by partners. Caseloads are consistent with district and state policy.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teacher Quality and Leadership 	<p>Staff expertise is characterized by strong subject matter knowledge, a wide variety of teaching strategies, a deep familiarity with student interests and learning styles, as well as, access to up to date information about community-based opportunities for students. Staff participates in governance.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evaluation System 	<p>There is a credible and professional evaluation process based on high standards of professional performance. This system succeeds in identifying and responding to identified areas of strength and weakness. There are clear avenues of recognition, support and consequence.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Professional Development 	<p>Professional development is both systemic and systematic. There is a strong plan for professional development. Professional development is deeply rooted in student and staff performance data. All staff have My Plans (district sanctioned, individual professional development plans) that are related to school goals, evaluation results and student learning needs and interests. There are high quality professional learning activities offered through out the school year, which are consistent with the prescriptions of the Order.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Resources and Support 	<p>There are sufficient staff and other resources so that teachers can fulfill their responsibilities. Teacher leaders are in place and have a positive impact on the quality of instruction.</p>

Progress to Date

The credit for the recent, dramatic improvements at Hope this fall are deservedly shared first and foremost among the teachers who made a decision to turn the school around, the rest of the staff, the students who are making decisions each day to focus themselves on achieving in school, the parents and guardians who are supporting students at home and the community partners who are stepping up into uncharted territory to participate, meaningfully. And little of the significant success at Hope could have happened without support and leadership of the three building assistant principals. Student Resource Officers – Providence Police Officers assigned to Hope – are part of the community and effective in supporting increased expectations for student behavior. Likewise, the Human Relations Specialists are invaluable. Other Student Support personnel are part of this committed and highly professional team.

However, another major reason things are going as well as they are is the professional competence and determination of the three lead administrators. What may be most extraordinary about their accomplishments to date is the fact that the team became complete less than one week before school opened. Despite the extremely disruptive effect of needing to replace the Arts principal at the last minute, they have come together as a team.

These three took hold of the situation, got the train back on its track and made the difference at Hope. They are serious about building effective community partnerships; they are visible and present in the school, its hallways and its classrooms. They are determined that Hope succeeds and provide consistent reinforcement and encouragement to the staff about that prospect. They have led the beginnings of what could, eventually become a renaissance of Hope. But Hope will only succeed if they are able to maneuver deftly through a complex array of competing priorities and are supported in doing so.

The balances they must manage include:

- 1) Maintaining the order they have established, while growing a sense of mutual respect and community among staff, students and families;
- 2) Investing in and carefully organizing a deep and challenging review of instructional efficacy while supporting staff morale and confidence;
- 3) Creating meaningful community partnerships while creating a clear focus and identify for each SLC;
- 4) Involving parents deeply while dealing with the frustrations that come with that challenge;
- 5) Revitalizing teaching and learning within the walls at Hope while insisting that more opportunities develop outside in the community; and
- 6) Continuing to support significant levels of professional deliberation and shared decision-making while establishing more effective process management systems to support those engagements.

Despite all of these challenges and their complexity prospects are strong for their continued success as leaders at Hope.

Nearly half of teacher respondents in 2004 identified “lack of time for planning” and “support” as significant issues. This remains a concern of many staff. However, the creation of a weekly “complex planning time” is seen as step forward. Teachers report a need to “do less and do it well,” in response to the myriad of activities presented during that time. However, most value

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the time and see it as an essential resource. This time is a rich resource at Hope. It needs to be better organized, more focused and its activities plainly discernible as smaller parts of a larger plan for improvement that every Hope community member can understand. Recent efforts to focus available time so that subject area teachers can meet together has been a positive development.

Continuation of *Institute for Learning* programs and activities are positive steps to personalize instruction and build stronger teacher skills and knowledge to address the academic needs of students at Hope. Efforts to focus on student work using criteria-based rubrics are evident throughout Hope, though the consistency of their use is still in question. Learning walks reveal an almost universal presence and attention to rubrics and the criteria they represent, however the depth and consistency of attention to these tools varies from classroom to classroom. Still, the evidence of attention to the practice of identifying the qualities of successful work with students before they attend to their work is a positive feature of the educational landscape at Hope.

In 2004, within two of the three SLCs less than 20% of teachers reported that a focus on student work samples was routine. Activities are being scheduled for this winter and springs professional development plan to focus on the protocols needed to review student work in order to 1) build a common understanding of quality in terms of student work products and to 2) analyze instructional strategies to maximize effectiveness.

The Commissioner's Order raises an expectation that teaching and learning "encompass a variety of instructional opportunities that extend beyond the traditional school day." The SALT Survey data relates to this challenge. Last year, on average more than 70% of teachers at Hope said that at least weekly the "real world applications of course material" were discussed and emphasized. Less than 20% of students reported that most of the time or always that their "classroom activities are connected to the world outside the classroom" with similar results regarding the relevance of school work to their "lives outside of school." This remains the case for the most part. Students perceive only modest efforts to build relevance into their class work.

Last year nearly one quarter of teaching assignments were held by long-term substitutes. This situation has been rectified. The staff at Hope is very strong. Teacher Leaders are in place and emerging as significant leaders in their own right. Clear articulation of their roles and responsibilities is still needed and is being addressed and a Lead Teacher Leader needs to be placed at Hope.

The development of a high-quality evaluation system described in the Order has not moved forward. Dependent on fully functioning SITs, this process must be accelerated. It is scheduled for SIT attention this winter and spring.

While much improvement remains in terms of the implementation of specific strategies, the foundation on which these efforts must be built – strong, committed, innovative, engaged staff – is in place. The staff is taking strong initiative to reinvigorate teaching and learning at Hope.

The strength of the staff at Hope and particularly their obvious decision to turn Hope around are one of the schools' richest resources. Improvement is showing already.

Strongest Performance, Areas In Need and Areas Of Critical Concern

The areas of strongest performance include:

- ✓ Leadership: Primarily responsible for the good start that Hope has had this year.
- ✓ Teacher Leaders: Good people working hard to support their peers.
- ✓ Teacher Quality: A full complement of highly qualified staff.
- ✓ Professional Development: While more work remains to create a more cogent overall plan for Hope, great strides have been made to provide support for professional learning.

The areas in need of improvement:

- ✓ Teaching and Learning: Individual teachers are working hard to maximize instructional effectiveness. Efforts to unify approaches have begun. These must continue.
- ✓ Evaluation Systems: Plans for the development of a performance-based accountability system will serve as an anchor for expectations regarding personalized approaches to teaching and learning.
- ✓ Resources and Support: Continuing to analyze the staffing patterns necessary to achieve strong and satisfactory student outcomes must serve as a guide for future budget development within the PPSD.

There are no areas of critical concern identified at this time.

At this time, the overall progress in compliance area #3- *Professionalism at Hope* - is determined to be – **satisfactory**.

Area # 4 – Active Parents And Engaged Community

Active Parents and Engaged Community at Hope: What are we trying to accomplish.	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ High Quality Plans for Parent Involvement ▪ Participation in Governance 	<p>Parent and community engagement at Hope is persistent, full and is the result of a high quality planning effort. Parents are welcome at Hope. They are present during the day in and out of classrooms as volunteers and observers. School “events” are filled with parents and community partners. Parents and community partners are fully involved in governance.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sustained Organization 	<p>There is assistance provided to organize parents into a vibrant, active organized group that creates and follows-up on innovations to support student learning. Alumni are organized and active in supporting and challenging the school system.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Written Community Partnership Agreements ▪ Real Educational Connections 	<p>Clear, results-oriented, significant and written partnership agreements that specify roles and responsibilities exist and drive partner activities. There are various connections made and nurtured with Providence Middle Schools, other High Schools and, in particular, with higher education. These “connections” result in high rates of matriculation, persistence and graduation into and out of high education institutions for Hope graduates.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inclusive Curriculum Design 	<p>Community partners and parents are deeply involved in decisions and planning regarding curriculum. They contribute as plans are developed, not just as respondents to plans created by others.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Coordinated Delivery of Services ▪ Linked Through Advisories 	<p>The High School is the center of a coordinated service delivery system that includes student support services, social services and other opportunities for student engagement with partners. At least one family member – other than the student – is contacted at least once every two months concerning the status and performance of the student in question. Families receive regular and timely updates about and invitations to school activities. Parent Compacts are agreed to and signed by a large majority of parents.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Meaningful Youth Leadership 	<p>Youth leadership is obvious and taken seriously at Hope as there is a vibrant, active student government through which student voices are heard on a myriad of topics – social, academic, operational, political and financial.</p>

Progress to Date

The SALT Survey response rates by parents are themselves low – averaging about 10% for 2004. Increasing the number of respondents is critical. A large majority of those who did respond report that they already think “the school views parents as important partners.” When asked about various discrete activities such as “being asked to volunteer,” responses to parent concerns or communication from school about good news or problems related to their child, positive responses are lower.

There is a strong, espoused commitment toward genuine and meaningful parent and community engagement among the staff at Hope. In 2004 teachers reported strong responses regarding their roles in communication, relationships and problem solving.

The Commissioner’s Order places significant focus on this aspect of school reform. It is expected that parents and community partners will be engaged as true partners, “not guests.” This is defined as participating in high-stakes decisions from the beginning of deliberations with some form of approval status. That is, they help create, they participate in final decisions and they work on important issues. Decisions about the nature and substance of courses for next year have been a persistent focus of staff deliberations. However, with some noted exceptions, the level of sustained participation of partners in curriculum revision is unclear.

While the specific task of articulating partnership agreements in writing remains incomplete, the substance and nature of a few emerging partnerships is very strong. In particular the proposed efforts with local institutes of higher education are moving forward. Brown University is supporting the professional development of Teacher Leaders across the Hope Complex. Roger Williams is engaged with the development of courses with the Leadership SLC. Johnson and Wales is playing a central role within the IT community. The Rhode Island School of Design (RISD) is a significant presence within the Arts SLC. In addition, recent discussions with Rhode Island College promise to take Hope forward another powerful step. The Providence Excellence in Education Coalition (PEEC) has been an active and important partner focusing significantly on parent engagement, student voice and school culture issues. The relationship with the Bank of Rhode Island is very strong – evidenced by participation on the Leadership SIT, a commitment to student scholarships and internships. In addition, the relationship between management and the Providence Teachers Union (PTU) representatives is a very positive one.

Outreach has been made to middle school students for recruitment purposes at Hope. The school-based initiative for this effort has been somewhat muted by district expectations that every school be afforded the same opportunities for recruitment. Freer competition in this regard should be examined.

Parent involvement at Hope is moving forward. A modest series of “events” has already been hosted. An open house was an early success. Nearly 30% of parents attended a

school report card night at which a “college fair” was incorporated. An automated calling system is used regularly. Advisors must reach out more in their roles as adult advocates.

Initially, there was low parent representation and community participation in the shared governance mechanisms at Hope. This is improving and more needs to be done to ensure full participation.

One major event that will accelerate Parent Engagement activities at Hope will be when a Parent Resource worker is installed at Hope. This is under discussion and something should be in place before the New Year.

Youth Leadership is growing at Hope. A student council is in place. An effort to “Enhance Student Voices” is moving forward. More than 120 students have already been engaged in giving feedback for this report. This process of providing opportunity for students to give real input regarding what goes on at their school must continue and grow.

The full integration and connection between traditional school operations and existing student support initiative such as the H2O program are essential. The improved climate at Hope has allowed somewhat better communication and collaboration the linking of the promising after-school programs at Hope. Moving this forward in explicit, well-articulated ways is important.

If Hope is to move forward toward a model of coordinated delivery of services, district leadership will need to establish a clear and concrete commitment to this process.

Strongest Performance, Areas of Greatest Need and Areas Of Critical Concern

The areas of strongest performance include:

- ✓ Participation in Governance: Parent and community participation has improved.
- ✓ Real Education Connections: Building relationships with middle schools and institutions of higher education will help create a seamless educational pathway for Hope students.
- ✓ Inclusive Curriculum Design: While room for improvement remains, partners are involved.

The areas of greatest need for improvement include:

- ✓ High Quality Plans for Parent Involvement: Clarity of these approaches integrated into the schools POP plan remains an essential step.
- ✓ Sustained Organization: Supporting the formation of separate Parent and Alumni groups is a priority.
- ✓ Written Community Partner Agreements: These will clarify roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ Coordinated Delivery of Services: Needs focused district attention.
- ✓ Meaningful Youth Leadership: Students at Hope must be more fully engaged in improvement efforts.

There are no areas of critical concern identified at this time.

At this time, the overall progress in compliance area #4- *Active Parents/Engaged Community* - is determined to be *satisfactory*.

Part III – Providence School District Support

Success at Hope depends, in part, on support and guidance provided by the Providence Public School District (PPSD.) Hope is, on the one hand, one of Providence’s many schools. On the other hand, it has a special status because of the Commissioner’s Decision and Order. There is a natural tension that has existed between these two perspectives.

System-wide efforts to improve Providence’s High Schools have a focus on improving every one of the schools in question. The Commissioner’s Order has the potential to assist with this cause, but it has its own primary purpose – improving Hope, now.

Work is moving forward to establish the appropriate balance of effort needed to achieve district wide goals and to meet the expectations of the Order at the same time.

Things are going well at Hope in part because of specific support from district office personnel. Interim leadership, which guided the district through its leadership transition – and particularly district staff with primary responsibility for coordination with the Special Master – has been responsive, creative and consummately professional.

The areas that relate to Hope most directly that are in greatest need of a include:

- ✓ Facilities Improvements: The situation at Hope remains dire. While efforts have been made, significant work remains. Unattended this will lead to unsafe and unsupportable learning environments that will risk accreditation as well as student and staff wellbeing.
- ✓ Technology Infrastructure: District staff in this area of operations is competent and effective when they are available. However, it seems that the capacity levels leads to long delays in responsiveness.

These are “systems” issues more than a “personnel issues;” “capacity” issues more than a “competence” issues. It is apparent that the senior district leadership – veteran staff and the new superintendent - are supportive of efforts at Hope and eager to improve district operations to serve schools. It is this commitment that allows for continued confidence in the district support of efforts at Hope High School.

Part III – Closing

Overall, progress toward improvement at Hope as described in the Commissioner's Decision and Order is underway and progress since this summer has been satisfactory. Much has been accomplished; many positive steps have been taken and predictably much work remains.

Closing questions and observations remain that cut across the particulars of this report.

The first is a reminder from Progress Report #1 released this last summer:

Focusing on this end – student success - by supporting the most effective instructional relationship possible between teachers, students, their families, community partners and the subject matter must remain the top priority. It is the promise of this reformation that carries the most hope for Hope.

Any and all actions by the Rhode Island Department of Education, the Providence Public School District, the current and future partners, the staff and leadership at The Hope High School Complex and the Special Master must remain focused on and true to these outcomes.

The second relates to the difference between incremental progress and dramatic change. Hope will continue to improve. The question is to what end? On its current slope of improvement Hope has a good chance of becoming an “above average” Providence High School in a few years. Is this satisfactory? What will it take to accelerate progress so that the results are Hope becoming an “excellent school” no matter the comparative context?

What about the fundamental issues such as student preparedness? The vast majority of incoming Hope students are too far behind - not too far behind to succeed, but too far to apply traditional improvement tactics. How can the district scope and sequence be used most effectively to build upon the low skills and knowledge with which many Hope students arrive? How can this be done without lowering the bar for everyone? What are the ways of truly differentiating and personalizing instruction within the confines of how high schools – and Hope - are structured? How can proposed improvement strategies take hold in a school without sufficient textbooks and other materials?

These are provocative questions, the answers to which lie in part in the structure and expectations of the Commissioner's Decision and Order and its emphasis on community connections, applied learning, personalization, professional development and high expectations. Another part of the answer is about resources, their effective use and what is needed to achieve higher levels of learning.

All of these are essential pieces that must be addressed in order to honor the most influential ingredient to the eventual dramatic success at Hope and other schools – the students and staff. Hope is on its way. It has had a very good start this year and the remainder of this year will be a very telling one. Pivotal challenges will be faced and

met. Hope will succeed because of the people who go to school work and there and their determination to make the school “work” for their students and themselves. Things are not perfect, but they are moving and they are moving in the right direction.

Let the last word come from a recent visitor to Hope who echoes what some who spend their time at the school feel at times: *“Hope High School had a phenomenal presentation. They had strong support from their teachers and staff. There was a band playing in the basement, they had tours given by students, and I have to add the building was spotless! Almost every teacher volunteered their time to be in their classrooms to show off student and classroom work. I literally got goose bumps walking down the hallways, for one could feel the student engagement and the staff support...”* Hope Visitor, November 2005

